



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Dance Undergraduate Theses

Dance

5-2019

Senior Thesis Paper

Shannon Moran

Loyola Marymount University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/dance_theses



Part of the [Dance Commons](#), [Other Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#), and the [Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Moran, Shannon, "Senior Thesis Paper" (2019). *Dance Undergraduate Theses*. 367.
https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/dance_theses/367

This Campus Access only theses is brought to you for free and open access by the Dance at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dance Undergraduate Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

Shannon Moran

May 2019

Senior Thesis Paper

After four years at Loyola Marymount University, it seemed like directing *Impulse* for my senior thesis was an inevitable choice, but it took a long series of other events for me to officially decide that this would be what I wanted my final project at LMU to be. There were definitely a few moments that needed to happen well before I was thinking about my thesis, otherwise I would not have chosen what I did. Quite frankly, I feel as though the true start that led me to this final decision occurred long before I had even known LMU existed. I first became interested in the technical side of performance in high school when I had signed up to be on running crew for our spring musical. During this first musical, we lost a stage manager mid-way through rehearsal, which resulted in some of those duties being given to me in attempts to redistribute the weight. I had handled these tasks with ease, and surprisingly liked it, so I was asked by Cliff, the director, to be the stage manager for next spring. Thus, my interest in stage management was born! I went on to continue stage managing my high school's musicals with my interest rapidly picking up speed, but I still had every intention to be a professional dancer for the rest of my life so I chose to be a dance major in college.

My first semester at LMU, I had no plans to continue working on the technical side of a production, wanting to focus on performing, but the universe had different plans for me. As a freshman, I was dealing with a huge life change and auditioning for a dance concert the very first week of living 3,000 miles away from everything I knew was not a feasible thing. By not dancing in the show, I unintentionally opened the door for the opportunity to stage manage it, my first experience stage managing concert dance and subsequently the first step at LMU towards

choosing my thesis project. Without my previous interest and experience with stage management, I doubt that the opportunity would have been given to me and I definitely would not have had the confidence to stage manage a dance concert, which is what sparked my interest in the technical side of concert dance. After moving past the initial fear of being a freshman stage managing a dance concert full of everyone older than me, I actually really enjoyed stage managing for dance. I even remember asking Sam Whidby if it were possible to be both a performer and a stage manager because I began to realize that I could be very happy with a non-performing career if it meant stage managing. Prior to these moments, I only really had an interest in working on musicals and LMU really opened my eyes to all of the productions I could be involved in and what it would be like working as a non-performer in the dance world; without this realization, there is no way I would have ended up with Impulse as my thesis.

Easily, one of the biggest factors that led to Impulse becoming my senior thesis was tearing the labrum in my left hip my junior year of college. After stage managing in the fall semester of my freshman year, I had not been on stage crew in any capacity because I was trying to strengthen my performance resume, and by putting stage management on the back burner I had forgotten how much I enjoyed being in the booth. I had gotten caught up in my lack of performance opportunities and the seeming death of my dance career before I even had it, that I had completely forgotten about my love for stage management and that this was still a feasible career for me. Up until this injury, I had been walking the line between deciding whether to work as a dancer or pursue stage management and due to my indecisive nature, I was still struggling to choose over a year later. As weird as it seems, I feel as though I needed something as serious as an injury that needs surgery to fix to push me over to the technical side. Once it became impossible to dance without being in pain, I knew I had to start rethinking everything, and thanks

to a few conversations I had with Scott Heinzerling about injuries and life after them, I decided it was time to give up performing and officially move onto stage management. All of my previous experiences made this decision far easier to make; I had honestly started to fall out of love with dance even before I got injured, so this life change felt less drastic. Without knowing it, I was simply taking one step closer to my thesis decision.

My injury, and the conversations with Scott, go hand in hand with the last piece that needed to fall into place in order for me to ultimately settle on Impulse as my thesis project: getting the opportunity to stage manage for the Spring concert in 2018. Having changed my career plan, Scott made it so that I would get to stage manage the Spring concert and it was this moment that reignited my love for the technical side of dance. After getting the opportunity to go back in the booth, I knew that I needed to continue expanding my experience working on the non-performing side of dance. I was reminded of just how much I love being a part of the team that creates and manages the space for others to share their art with the outside world. As a junior, I was genuinely thinking about what my senior thesis should be now that I could no longer dance, and all of these moments from the past six years had led up to me making my final decision. All of these important events led to my decision because without my initial interest in high school, I would not have started stage managing at LMU, and without my injury I would not have been forced to rethink my initial career plans and choose Impulse as my thesis. After all this, I knew Impulse was the most logical and fitting solution to this problem of not knowing what my project would be; if I could stage manage I might as well have tried my hand at directing to see if I enjoyed doing that as well.

One of the main things I had hoped to learn throughout this project, aside from the obvious desire to learn what it would be like to be a director, I think I was hoping this project

would help clear up the confusion I had about what career path to choose. Choosing tech over performing was only the first step, I still had many fields to choose from within the technical side and this decision was much more difficult than I had expected. While I seemed to be very certain in my desire to stage manage as a career, there were still many doubts as to whether or not this was true. I had this constant looming fear that I only thought I wanted to stage manage because it was what I was used to and what I had always been told I was “good at” and that I would actually thrive and enjoy myself more elsewhere. I was afraid that I was being complacent with my life and I hoped that Impulse would help me branch out and understand who I want to be as a working professional in the dance world. Additionally, I have always been one to get bored easily and want to try every job I possibly could, so I hoped through directing Impulse I would also get the opportunity to play a different role and get the change I was desperately craving within my educational life, while learning if this change was meant to become a permanent one. I wanted to get out of my comfort zone for a bit and see what life was like in this new realm of the dance world.

Lastly, I hoped that this would help me in the future as a stage manager, if in the end I had decided that stage management truly was my calling. If I knew what it was like to be a director, I would hopefully be able to understand their perspective in more depth in the future and be able to cater to their needs in a significantly more thoughtful way. Nothing helps create perspective better than stepping into the other persons shoes and through my project I was hoping to broaden my horizons and experiences within a different job than I was used to. Going through my time at LMU, I remembered constantly hearing about how it was vital to being a good employee to have a basic knowledge of as many aspects of a production as possible and I wanted Impulse to be my way to learn another perspective to aid me in my future technical

theatre endeavors. I wanted, and expected, my thesis project to help me grow and understand more than I had before and turn me into a better, more well-rounded person for others to work with post-graduation.

I knew going into this project that I would face a plethora of challenges, but I was mostly worried that everyone would know that I had absolutely no idea what I was doing and that I would screw up and inadvertently ruin the show. I had obviously never been a director before, and I was given so much freedom to do this completely on my own, that I truly had no clue where to begin or what to do. My biggest challenge was going to be finding the balance between trusting my instincts, because obviously I would not have been allowed this project if I did not seem capable of doing a good job, and admitting that I did not have all of the answers and asking for help when needed. I struggled a bit with recognizing that at the end of the day, this was meant to be a learning process and I was not a failure for admitting I did not know the best way to handle all of the tasks coming my way. In my past, I had been a part of productions where it was apparent that the person in charge was unsure of themselves and/or their roles, meaning I knew what it felt like to be a performer in that atmosphere. While I was trying very hard to not become that leader, I could not help but worry that I would mess up and have the show fall apart on me and those participating. I wanted nothing more than to create the best, most efficient, show environment for my peers to perform in, wanting to respect them as much as they did me by signing up to choreograph for Impulse, but I knew that it was going to be a challenge given my lack of directorial experience. I was afraid to let the department down by not creating the level of professional performance quality they were expecting from me. I knew going into this, my thesis would be filled with confusion, mistakes, and just the right amount of chaos to keep me on my toes and I was slightly ready for the challenge.

That being said, getting started was definitely the easiest part of this project: all I had to do was walk into Damon's office and ask to be the director. After that, it was a large waiting game, not really knowing when the appropriate time was for me to start doing things for Impulse. Personally, getting start on my thesis was quite a bit of mentally preparing myself for what was about to come. I had to continuously coach myself through backing out of this project because with all of the down time I had before I needed to truly start working on Impulse, I had more time to convince myself that I was underqualified for the position and that I should relinquish it to someone who would do better. I have always had a habit of not trusting my ability to accomplish any task successfully, but I knew that I could not be this unsure of myself once my job began. As a result, I spent the beginning period of this project working though my anxieties in attempts to avoid them getting in the way of me being the best director that I could and wanted to be. Within that, I also had to prepare myself for the inevitable moments where I had to deny a request, knowing that these requests would be coming from people I had grown close to in the program. I hate having to be the "bad guy" in any situation therefore, I knew I needed to mentally prepare myself for those moments since they would involve friends instead of strangers, making it that much harder for me to do. I have always had a hard time taking on leadership roles at first because I tend to want to allow the love of my friends and a desire to avoid conflict control my decisions, but I knew this time if I allowed that to happen, this project would not be as successful. I had faith that all of the personal growth I had made during my time at LMU prepared me for these moments and took solace in the fact I definitely find it much easier to take on the leader role in an unbiased manner than I did as a freshman.

The process of bringing Impulse to fruition was truthfully a chaotic, anxiety ridden blur. I felt like I went from having nothing to do for Impulse to having a million tasks everyday with

constant emails, texts, and phone calls trying to organize every little detail of the show. Whether this is how it always feels, or just a side effect of my being a brand-new director, I never figured out, but the end result was something I am proud of so, thankfully, it all worked out in the end. The steps required to make this project successful felt like they came out of nowhere; it felt like I had nothing to do for months and then all of a sudden, the show was happening and I had a million different emails to respond to and meetings to attend. Soon, I was organizing production meetings, answering questions, planning with the photographer and videographer, asking everyone to send both me and Heather Romanowski their music, sending out reminder emails, and all other housekeeping items that had to get done before making it to tech. Most of the things required of me were more surrounding creating the environment and space for others to do their jobs, delegating tasks to those far more qualified for each job, than it was for me to actually do anything myself; I felt like I was more of an overseer of everything. Maybe this is simply the job of a director, to foster an environment where every member of the creative team can produce their best work for the outside world to appreciate.

The biggest challenge through the entire project, was curbing my anxiety enough to do a good job. I spent most of the time I was working on this project nervous and worrying about everything, having several journal entries where I expressed my concern that I was underqualified, messing everything up, and completely failing at my job. I have an entry from December 5th that is filled with nothing but my fears going into this project and my questioning whether or not I was the right person for the job because thirty-two dances were signed up for Impulse at that point. Thankfully, this number dwindled down to a more manageable amount for me. A few days later, I wrote another anxiety filled entry, expressing gratitude for the fact that Impulse opened the first weekend of February because “I could not handle this anxiety for more

than a few months.” I also shed light on my fear every single time I received an email regarding Impulse because I was “afraid it is something negative about me or Impulse.” I remember constantly jumping at Impulse emails because it felt like it was just another task being given to me that I could easily mess up, someone letting me know of a mistake that I had already made, or that I had managed to upset someone already.

I was so stressed out about this project, that I had a panic attack after sending the reminder email about the production meeting because it was the first moment where this project felt real to me. Up until this meeting, directing Impulse was more of a job I was saying that I had, but seeing as I had not truly done anything for it past putting up a sign-up sheet, this was the first big step of making my thesis a reality. This was also the first moment I knew that my anxiety was going to attempt to get the better of me every moment. The thought of fully taking on the directorial role in front of all my peers sent me into a tizzy of fear and panic so much so that I had to rehearse every word I was planning to say in this meeting because I was so utterly terrified of misspeaking and embarrassing myself in front of everyone. Within this challenge of directing with anxiety, I allowed my anxiety to get the better of me when it came to sending out emails. I found myself terrified of sending too many emails from fear of coming across annoying that I would opt to wait a little bit longer to press send on an email, instead of providing my peers with the information they needed in a timelier manner. There were many instances, like asking them to get their music in on time, or providing them the running order of the show, where I could have given them longer notice than I did simply due to the panic surrounding sending emails. Looking back, I realize that part of being a director is putting the production above my own personal feelings and this was definitely the most challenging part of making

Impulse a reality and something that I both wish I could change and recognize I need further development in.

A majority of making this project a reality were constant emails and texts making sure everything was ready to go for the tech rehearsals. I was constantly answering questions, sending out reminders, and approving things, such as which days the photographer and videographer would be coming, that it felt like my phone never stopped ringing. After the first initial meeting with everyone, the next big step of making Impulse happen were the tech and dress rehearsals. On day one of tech week, I had to orchestrate the floor load in, which went surprisingly smoother than I expected. There were only a few mishaps along the way of there being too many air bubbles in the Marley, the floor getting taped wrong, and the lights getting cabled incorrectly, so overall this felt like a successful step toward the final result. We got it done pretty quickly and I also got to learn how to daisy chain lights together to make them work in a space with limited lighting resources and how to troubleshoot when a light would respond to the wrong channel number. I was also pleasantly surprised with how well everyone responded to needing to redo the floor; I had expected people to be upset with me for not knowing that it was being done incorrectly sooner, but everyone was happy to help. After the floor load in, I had to meet up with David Karagianas to help him set up the sound system for the show. Once tech and dress rehearsal actually began, it felt like my job and responsibilities practically vanished. I found myself standing around, waiting for a question to come my way or an errand I could run. It felt weird to be standing around more often than not because I am so used to acting as a stage manager where there is absolutely always something I could be and should be doing. Having this programmed into my work ethic allowed room for my anxiety to kick back in and convince myself that I must have forgotten a task I needed to get done. Once again, my biggest struggle

was convincing myself that I would not have been trusted with this job if I were not ready for the challenge and that just because I was not doing something in the moment did not mean I was making a mistake. I had spent so much time planning every single moment that there was no way I would be forgetting something important.

By this point in my thesis project, it felt as though I had reached the point where I no longer had any control over the production. My only job was to simply let the head of each department (i.e sound, lighting, etc.) do their job so that the entire show would come together by opening night and support them all in whatever ways they needed. This definitely contributed to the fact that, as I write this, I feel as though I cannot take the credit for the success of the show because at the end of the day I did not do the hard parts. Heather designed all of the lights and created the show in QLab, David was in charge of setting the sound levels, we had the assistant stage manager running sound and, of course, I had nothing to do with the creative process that led to each individual piece that made up this show. There was nothing for me to do except watch the past several months come together to a beautiful two-night show that I was immensely proud of. The very last thing I had to do for this project was to strike the set and this was also a large success. Everyone worked together so efficiently that I was beyond impressed with how quickly everyone got it taken down and put away in the garage and I cannot begin to express my gratitude for how wonderful everyone was throughout the entire process.

I think the biggest surprise of this project was when word got back to me that one of my own peers was saying negative things about me while I was not present. I had to miss tech for a class, a problem that I had cleared with Heather and everyone prior, and while I was away, I received word that a fellow student involved in the production had said I did not have my priorities straight because I did not skip my class for tech and that my thesis should be more

important than anything else. This was a bit of a rude awakening in a sense because I am sure this is a problem that exists within the real world, but I had always written it off as a school problem. At the time, it seemed like nothing more than college girls being young and immature, but after thinking about it further, it is a human tendency for some to say things about another person behind their back so in a weird sense, this helped me learn how to deal with knowing this fact. While I tried my best to not allow silly college problems to get to me, it still hurt a bit to know that someone I trusted would say anything negative about me during my absence. Seeing as one of my biggest fears throughout the course of this project was that my fellow students would recognize that I had no clue what I was doing and that I was just floundering through everything, hearing this really set me back a bit confidence wise, but it helped to shed light on where I need to develop more on a personal level. I could not help but think about the fact that even after working with me for four years, they still did not have the respect that I was trying to provide them so what was going to happen when I was placed in a position of authority in the real world? While this was not a major setback in the grand scheme of things, it was a hit to my already shaky directorial confidence and one that I did not expect to come from a fellow LMU dance student.

I think if I could do anything differently, it would be to put more of a focus on fundraising through audience donations and to have changed the entire creation process of the programs. I felt like I was not given enough notice about the fact that NDEO was using Impulse to raise money for their trip to Panama and therefore I did not do a very good job of advertising this or raising as much money as I could have. Had I known, I would have loved to advertise this fundraiser more on social media, and potentially have had a bake sale or something where the audience could buy goods during intermission to increase their incentive to donate. I also would

have wanted to make a note of that in the program so that there was a written reminder about it instead of just my pre-show announcements. Looking back and knowing that Cassidy Gempler, last year's Impulse director, put an emphasis on raising money, I should have contacted her to discuss what she did so that I could figure out my own personal take on it.

The only other aspect of the show that I would have loved to do differently would be the programs. Design wise, I loved them and thought they looked amazing, but creating them was the bane of my existence and in the end the result still was not correct. The programs had to go through three rounds of edits and the final programs still had many errors that my team and I had to fix with white out and Sharpie markers the night of the shows. Looking back, I wish I had an outside person review them because there were so many spelling mistakes that I did not catch because I had made those same mistakes when writing the names down in the first place. In the future, I know that I want at least three different sets of eyes going over the programs, looking for mistakes so that I can avoid this issue next time. The programs were such a mess that it reached the point where my designer no longer had the time to keep fixing all of the mistakes that kept getting brought up and this is something I never want to happen in the future. I felt bad enough that this happened with one of my fellow dance students, I could not imagine how mortified I would be if this same issue occurred when I was working a professional job. That being said, there were also issues with the program that were beyond my control, like cast changes being made very last minute, after the first round of programs had been printed, that provided me with unexpected setbacks as well. I think that I should have either made a deadline for cast and music changes to occur, barring some emergency cases, or at least sent out a notice that the choreographers should let me know immediately if any changes to music or cast did occur. After it was all said and done, I know now that I should have sent the program out to the

entire cast and crew and had them email me any changes or spelling mistakes, instead of assuming that the choreographers would email me the changes as they happened. This was a silly mistake on my part, but I am using it as a learning moment since I cannot turn back time. Moving forward from this disaster, I intend to create a smoother process for creating programs, should that job ever fall onto me again, because I did not enjoy any aspect of this process for Impulse and did not even end up with a final result I would willingly give to the audience.

Overall, I would say that I am very happy with the results of my project. Despite my fears and mistakes, Impulse truly looked like a real dance show and I am still overwhelmed with joy over the success of it. There was a good turnout both nights, something I feared would not have happened, and all of the pieces looked beautiful. The show had ended up coming together very smoothly despite all of the bumps in the road along the way, and I am eternally grateful for every person who stepped in to help pull the whole show off and keep me sane throughout. At the end of the day, the final result was as incredible as it was because of the talent of every single artist who participated and I feel like I cannot take credit for any of it. While I was in charge of the logistics of Impulse, I would not have had anything to do if my peers did not sign up to present their work and it would not have been as successful as it was if they were not all so incredibly talented and hard-working. Words will never express how fulfilled I felt after closing night, thanks to those special individuals who made up Impulse. Despite the things that I wished I had done differently, or the things I wished I had more time for, Impulse turned out better than I would have expected for a project I was mostly in charge of. By the end, I felt a strange sense of accomplishment for having succeeded in a level of responsibility I thought I was incredibly underqualified for.

Impulse definitely hit many of the skills I was hoping to get out of my senior thesis project. Directing Impulse, without a doubt, helped to clear up my confusion about my future. While I enjoyed my time as a director, I can honestly say I prefer being a stage manager and do not foresee myself pursuing a career in directing any time soon. Being in charge of coordinating all the aspects of a production was too much for me to handle and I would much rather be writing rehearsal reports and calling cues from the booth. Recognizing that Impulse is a far smaller production than others I might face in the future, and that this project got to be too overwhelming for me occasionally, made it apparent that the level of responsibility that comes with being the director of a production is not one that I am fit to handle at this current point in my life, nor is it one that I would want to take on. As a stage manager, I tend to be much better at keeping calm in the most stressful of situations and not losing my cool when anything goes wrong, but as a director I was always anxious, panicked, and never really knew the best way to deal with or cope from any roadblocks. Going into this, I thought that since I could handle the chaos of stage management with ease, that it would bleed over into being a director and this project made me realize that this thought was not true at all. I found myself on the verge of tears more often during the course of this project than I have in all my years of stage management. I got the confirmation I needed that stage management truly is where I am meant to be in my future and I feel much more secure in that decision after Impulse.

I can also say that this experience is one that I will carry into my hopeful future as a stage manager. Knowing what I needed from my assistant stage manager throughout the process of Impulse means that I can be better at anticipating the needs of my future directors, both emotionally and production wise, to help keep them calm and keep the production running smoothly. Also having the knowledge and experience with running a floor load in, creating

programs, setting up sound, cabling lights, and the other skills I acquired throughout the course of Impulse means that I will be able to help with more elements of a production, which is another goal I was hoping to achieve with my thesis. By having more knowledge of these things, I can offer to take the burden off the director by taking over a task or two for them if/when the production seems to be overwhelming them. In my work life, I always aspire to be as helpful as I possibly can be, and as a stage manager this definitely enhanced the skill set I already had, while also teaching me new skills that will make me a better person to work with all around. This project also gave me a newfound appreciation for directors in general. While I obviously always had respect for directors, now that I tried to fill that role and understand what it truly feels like to be in their shoes, I commend those who both love and thrive in that career because I do not feel as though I could ever do it; this project has given me a new level of empathy towards directors.

I truly think the only aspect of my project that I feel slightly unfulfilled in was the fundraising aspect. I had no clue up until about three weeks before Impulse was going to open that NDEO was planning on having a fundraiser, and that the donations audience members made would be going towards their trip to Panama. As I have said previously in this paper, I wish that I had done this differently and put a stronger emphasis on the fundraising aspect so that I could have hopefully gotten more donations to help NDEO out with both Panama and future endeavors. I feel like the fundraising aspect got pushed aside to focus on the greater workings of the show and as a result this became the main part of my project where I actually feel like it needed greater development. There were so many things that could have been done to get the word out and raise more money and it all just fell through the cracks. With the power of social media today, it would have been so easy to advertise the fundraiser and I simply just did not think of that at the time. As a member of a sorority on campus, I do have a background with

philanthropy and I am slightly disappointed in myself for not placing a stronger emphasis on it during my project. Moving forward, I know that I need to work on making sure that I prioritize each aspect of the production equally, to avoid allowing important things to slip through the cracks again.

I also feel slightly unfulfilled with the programs because I feel as though I dropped the ball on that one. The fact that I had to open the show, and still did not have programs with the correct information was truly disappointing on my part. Looking back, there were so many precautions I could have taken to ensure that all of the information was correct, but instead I just assumed it was all right the first time and sent it to print. I definitely should have prioritized the programs more than I did, instead of making them a second-tier priority. There were a lot of things that I did not think about because I was so overwhelmed with other aspects of this project, as well as my outside class and work schedules that were not put on pause while I was directing Impulse. My program editing skills definitely need further development because I obviously did not know how to check them properly considering they were still incorrect come show day. I know now that I need to take a closer look at the spelling of all names in the program, having missed a few because my eyes did not catch the small mistakes, and also that I need several outside people to proofread everything so that next time I do not have to print multiple batches of incorrect programs. The programs could have been handled far better than they were and that truly is nobody's fault but my own.

To put it simply, all of my experiences and time at Loyola Marymount University have all led to one final decision: I want to spend the rest of my life working in production for both dance and theatre. If I were to think about it more specifically, having the opportunity to direct Impulse definitely helped give me a ton of insight I had never had before. Learning all of the

small details directors needed to pay attention to, details that I had never had to think about prior to this project, opened my eyes to exactly how much work truly goes into a production, past what I had seen through a stage manager's point of view. With that, it made me that much more aware of all that is left for me to learn in my future career, while also preparing me further for said future. Before directing Impulse, I had absolutely no experience leading a floor load in, creating a tech schedule, getting together information for a program, or being the main point of contact for all members of a project. All of these skills are pivotal to a successful future in the theatre production world and skills that will follow me as I embark on the next ten years of my life and beyond. This level of responsibility is not one that I have had experience with before and this project taught me a few things about being a leader, most importantly, that I have quite a bit of growing to do before I become the leader I aspire to be.

The biggest thing I learned throughout this process is to not worry so much about being everyone's friend and instead, focus more on making everything run as smoothly and efficiently as humanly possible. I found myself worried about sending too many emails in a short amount of time from fear of being considered annoying by my peers, opting instead to wait a little bit longer to send out information. As a result the entirety of the choreographers did not get nearly as much time to get all of the things asked of them done as I should have given them. I know for a fact that I need to keep this lesson with me in my future and constantly remind myself that the show is more important than anything else at the end of the day. I needed to learn better how to act like a director and a professional when working with my peers instead of a friend and this project helped me tremendously to do so. I have to understand that when in a position like director, the overall success of the production is more important than making everyone be my friend. That is not to say this process made me think that I should not be personable at all, but it

did provide me with the awakening I needed to begin to work on calming my anxieties about being annoying. I now understand that everyone wants and needs the information I am providing and are not upset by multiple emails so I need not to worry about that in my future. Without this thesis, I would have been worse off when I finally do begin to work within the theatre community and no longer have the safety net LMU has provided these past four years.

The second thing I learned during this project, is how to both be in charge and delegate tasks so that every single aspect of the show did not fall to me. Within that, I learned the steps of a floor load in and setting up a small dance stage because I had to be in charge of communicating directions to everyone else. This in itself was not something that I had any idea how to do, which seems rather helpful for my future, but being placed in a position where I had no choice but to delegate helped me work on my communication skills. I would not have said that coming into this project I was very good at giving directions, or supervising instead of being the one receiving the directions, making this very good practice for me. Heather left me as the main point of contact for all questions, only jumping in when it was apparent that I did not have the answer, so I learned how to explain things like coiling cables so as not to ruin them, or putting the dance floor down properly to people who had never done it before. I have always been one to try and accomplish everything on my own, so being placed in a role where it was truly impossible to run everything on my own forced me to delegate and subsequently get better at doing so. This also eliminated the fear I had of delegating equating to being incapable, which will help me more than I can probably imagine in my journey post-graduation.

This also helped me learn how to nicely ask someone to redo something in a way that did not make them feel bad, which is vital to what will come in future jobs. It is so important to understand that, and up until this project, most of my jobs had been small enough that I could do

every task expected of me without needing to delegate responsibilities to others; I was always the one being asked to redo something, never the one asking. I know that personally, I can get very discouraged if someone criticizes my work in a way that feels harsh and dismissive, which definitely made me very worried to accidentally say the wrong thing and make someone feel badly about their work. I had no clue the best way to help someone fix an honest mistake and my thesis project definitely helped clear up some of that confusion. Throughout the course of this project, there were inevitably going to be mistakes on both my part and the part of a different member of the creative team, so I definitely got a bit of practice when it came to asking people to fix things and how to work through mistakes and obstacles as a team instead of on my own. I think the most important lesson I took from this that will help me greatly in my future is that if you start a request by pointing out something they did correctly, people respond better when you then ask them to fix a different part of it. Also, offering to help them is always received well.

Within this, another thing this project taught me is that there reaches a point where you can no longer ask for something to be fixed and just have to accept it as is. With the case of the programs, I had to ask Darren to fix them approximately three times before we both gave up because it felt too demanding and he had his own life to focus on. While this was not his fault, it was a matter of both choreographers unexpectedly changing titles and music last minute and simple spelling mistake that I did not catch when proofreading, it still gave me learning moments to figure out how to continuously ask someone for assistance. Another smaller thing I learned: always have multiple sets of eyes proofread a program before sending it to print.

My thesis project also taught me that I have a long way to go before I would consider myself as good as I could possibly be in any role I might take on in the next five years and beyond, but especially as a director. I was not very prepared for the role as director, having

absolutely no idea what I was doing, even though I was being trusted completely, but I feel as though this moment was the best way to be thrown to the wolves. Overall this project allowed me the room to mess up and learn from my mistakes in a setting that was meant to foster growth and expected mistakes to occur and I feel like that is the most important thing for my future career. Without the trip ups that occurred, I would not have been as prepared as I feel I am now for things to go wrong and would not have been equipped with knowledge on how to handle those with ease and calmness. Without the opportunity to fail without judgement, and with a support system behind me the entire way, I would not have learned all that I have to create the foundation needed for the next five years and onwards off the bluff.

Not only has my thesis helped me grow immensely into a closer version to the working professional I want to be, but so has every single experience that led me to choosing to serve as the director for Impulse as my senior thesis project. After having the opportunity to direct a dance concert, stage manage both dance and theatre productions, and even learn a little bit of lighting design, I have undoubtedly found the field I am the happiest in. My time at LMU has taught me that I thrive in the high stress of stage managing and would take a long tech rehearsal in the booth over three hours in a studio any day. Coming in as a dance major my freshman year, I never would have imagined that technical theatre would be where I wanted to spend the next five years and onward. Thanks to all of the shows I have gotten to work on within the dance and theatre programs, I have gotten much closer to solidifying what I want to do with the rest of my life. I will not say that I am completely certain in my career path, but I have a better starting point than when I first set foot on the bluff as a freshman. My thesis, combined with countless pieces of advice from everyone who has helped me on my journey in all four years of school,

helped me get to where I am and will continue to help me get to where I want to be, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

Immediately following LMU, I do not know much about where life will lead me in the next five years, but I know that I want to work in Los Angeles for a while before ultimately ending up working on Broadway, as a stage manager of course. While I enjoyed serving as a director, this project solidified that I want to be a stage manager for a long time after graduation, if not forever. Throughout all the trials and tribulations of this thesis, I learned that I am my happiest as a stage manager, and that I prefer the level of responsibility and chaos that stage management entails far more than that of a director. This project taught me that I am far better at keeping things organized, and controlling a show once it has been created into whatever a director wants than I am at being the creative mind behind the scenes. While I expected to enjoy having more control, I was surprised to find out that this level of control is not one I want within the next five years of my life. I am way more comfortable in a stage management role and would prefer to push those boundaries in my time off the bluff, as opposed to other non-performing jobs in theatre and dance. I do want to continue learning, never settling for one singular job the rest of my life, but I want to do so at a time when I feel more prepared. I do intend to keep learning more about lighting design, production management, and directing, but I by no means foresee myself pursuing a career in anything that is not stage management and/or production management within the next five to ten years. At the end of the day, my heart belongs in stage management and this thesis project helped to eliminate any doubts I had fabricated about whether or not I truly thrived as a stage manager or if I just convinced myself of that since I knew nothing else. I had one goal of college and that was to find a place and create a life that I

would be truly happy in and thanks to my senior thesis and the time spent at LMU I can happily say this goal was achieved and I am beyond ready to go out and take the world by storm.